

New Trends in Japanese Scholarship on Islam

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ABSTRACT

When there is talk about Islam, Japan is not a country that comes instantaneously to our minds. Nevertheless, there are many substantial bonds and links between Japan and the Islamic world. Japan's resource diplomacy, which centres mainly on petroleum and oil, is one of these. Perhaps, that is why various aspects of Islam including history and culture as well as the relationship with the Muslim world have been some of the important areas of scholars' interest in Japanese academia, particularly in the last few decades.

There have been three peaks in the history of Japanese scholarship regarding Islam: first is before the Second World War, the second is post-war period after the "oil shock" and the last is after 9/11. Although, Islam was not studied as a religion in early stages because the role of comparative religion was minor and the Japanese scholarship in general was mainly confined to publications in Japanese language. However, gradually the situation has improved. The academic activities in recent years are different from earlier as the spectrum of research has widened studying Islam from various approaches such as methodological and typological. Another recent trend is the production of quite reasonable amount of material in English.

This brief survey on Japanese scholarship on Islam shall trigger the attention of Pakistani scholars for further studies and be helpful to understand how Islam is perceived in Japan.

Key words: Scholarship, Japanese, Islam, Study, Japan.

INTRODUCTION

Islam's contact with Japan is not very old as compared to other religions. The first Mosque in Japan was built in 1905 at Izumi Oksu by Muslim soldiers in Russian captivity. Besides building mosques, propagation of Islam in Japan was strengthened by the establishment of Islamic centres and organizations in various cities, which were a natural outcome of the activities of Islamic communities in the country. Japan is perhaps one of the countries in the world where Islam has found its way last. It is uncertain whether Japan is the last country in the world to have seen the light of Islam¹. Its course of event is being watched not only by the Japanese scholars but also by the scholars around the world, especially those of the Muslim countries.

However, students who are familiar with the history of Islam in Southeast Asia would not deny that indeed Japan, unlike her nearest neighbours China and South Korea, is one of the latest countries in Asia that has been exposed to Islam. Despite the fact, the interest to know about Islamic world in Japanese people grew rapidly, and particularly in recent decades a swiftly increasing number of young scholars are studying various aspects of Islam and the Muslim world including the culture, history and the Japanese-Muslim relationship.

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curriculum can produce reflective, creative, and responsible individuals who refrain from borrowing ideas. His thoughts have the capacity to meet the challenges of the modern age. Syed Maududi's simple answers to complex problems have a wide appeal. It is a need of the day to implement the educational system as was suggested by Syed Moududi. It will not only change the character of students but also contribute to make them good Muslims. Frequent research studies on Syed Moududi's intellectual and educational contribution will help us implement his Educational Program in a right way.

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countries, it was necessary to prepare our women for defensive purposes as well. It must be clearly understood that Islamic culture was totally different from the western culture. There was no affinity whatsoever between them. In the west the women was not entitled to any right or honour unless she succeeded in performing the functions of a man. Islam on the other hand protected her rights and conferred dignity upon her as a woman. It assigned her those responsibilities, which suited her feminine nature. The program for women's education should, therefore, be designed according to their specific needs and requirements. As for co-education, there was no scope for it in an Islamic education system at any level.⁴⁷

Hence the program of women's education must be designed in accordance with the teachings of Islam. The primary responsibility of a woman is to look after her home and family, as well as the children. The educational program for women should therefore equip them to discharge these responsibilities efficiently.⁴⁸

QUALITY VS QUANTITY

Syed Maududi gave a complete picture of content of all levels of education (i.e. primary, secondary, higher education). He discussed the subjects that should be taught at different levels of education in detail as well as he stressed upon adapting good and effective methodologies for teaching those contents. He gave a complete program of teachers' training. He stressed upon appointing sincere people on teaching posts and forbade appointing lazy and inactive individuals. Furthermore, the task of character building should assume the focal point in the new educational program. Educational goals could not be established merely by imparting theoretical knowledge to our students. Transmission of knowledge without moral edification had never been the aim of Muslim education. It was therefore imperative to provide an Islamic orientation to the school system. Whether engineers, scientists, social scientists or civil servants, all should invariably be the embodiments of Islamic virtues. A man, however learned he might be, could not play his part in Maududi's scheme, if he lacked an Islamic character.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

Syed Maududi is one of the most widely read Muslim writers and scholars. His books have been translated into several languages of the world. He was a prolific writer, turning out numerous pages every month. He focused on the description of ideas, values and basic principles of Islam. He paid special attention to the questions arising out of the conflict between the Islamic and the modern world. Syed Maududi's educational thoughts emphasize such type of education that manifests inspiration from Islamic ideology. He emphasized on amalgamation of religious and worldly knowledge. Moral development is the main theme of Syed Maududi's thoughts. He criticized the role of madrasa that was failing to address the needs of society. He proposed a practical and applicable education system for all levels. Syed Maududi gave the practical solutions of educational problems of the society. Syed Maududi showed the unbending opponents, who claimed that Islamic education was outdated and would therefore lose the significance, that how Islam's holistic philosophy of education could be put into practice. His suggested

- Five departments of higher education were suggested by Maulana Maududi: Philosophy, History, Economics, Law, Islamic studies.⁴²

MORAL EDUCATION

Syed Maududi suggested that along with the academic program mentioned above, students also need to be given a background of the following moral rudiments:

- They should be complete Muslims in their thinking as well as in outlook and should be inspired by the spirit to lay down their lives for the sake of Islam.
- They should have a profound knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence as well as a revival insight into religion so that they can restructure the existing social and cultural life along Islamic lines.
- Their Islamic training should be of such a high order as to dominate the intellectual world of the time.
- They should be immune from the voices which are not according to the Quran and Hadith; they should avoid the attributes of infidels' that are hypocrites and diametrically opposed to Islamic law and pernicious to a society. They should be an embodiment of those virtues which, in the words of the Quran, are the traits of the faithful and pious.
- They should be able to stand independently in the struggle of life; they should be all-rounder and capable of making their way through any situation.⁴³

CO-EDUCATION

In an interview for "Students' Voice", (a paper representing Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba) in 1955, Maududi said that he was strictly against the system of co-education. It was very dangerous for the moral development of a nation. It hindered the intellectual growth of students and was discouraging for society. Many countries in the globe had experienced it and the results were obvious for all. In response to a question that co-education helped to understand the opposite sex - he replied that both sexes had been living in the world since their creation and nature had always been teaching them to understand each other.⁴⁴

TEACHERS' TRAINING

Syed Maududi suggested that the role of a teacher was to polish the hidden potentials of students in order to channel them towards goodness. Training of teachers should be based on following facets:

- A thorough knowledge of religion.
- Command over scientific knowledge.
- Positive attitude towards profession.
- Development of amiable and ideal personality.⁴⁵

WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Syed Maududi wrote that girls' education was as important as that of boys. He wrote, 'No community can progress if its females are ignorant'.⁴⁶ He also considered it necessary that women should be given even military training. Maudodi observed that in view of the belligerent attitude of neighbouring

Maududi divided the length of total academic period(14 years) into three stages: Primary: 8years, Secondary: 2 years and Higher Level 4 years.³⁵The medium of instruction, for both boys and girls, he wrote, should be the mother tongue.³⁶

AIMS OF EDUCATION

Syed Maududi was in favour of transmitting Islamic culture and civilization through education. He desired to build the character of the youngsters of Muslim Nation (*ummah*) in the light of Islamic philosophy of life. Syed Maududi holds that education is the gateway to revolution. Education is the only means by which milieu is created for bringing about the necessary changes and improvements. Syed Maududi contends that the thesis of education should be based on the following aims:

- Strengthening the truthfulness of *Islam* in the hearts of students.
- Forming the character of students in Islamic context.
- Producing creative individuals.
- Transmitting the culture to younger generation.³⁷

CURRICULUM

For achieving the aims of education, Syed Maududi considered curriculum as the most imperative component of the educational process. Syed Maududi proposed curriculum for all levels of education i.e. primary, secondary and higher level. His curriculum model is based on following points:

- Curriculum at primary level is responsible to develop good habits (decency and decorum, cleanliness, politeness, self-accountability, self-respect)
- Ability to discriminate between good and bad, quality of being hypocritical.
- Develop the everlasting attachment to the attributes for collective life as defined in *Quran* and the *Hadith*.
- Curriculum is holistic, harmonious, and balanced only if it prepares an individual for social adjustment, develops a sense of responsibility, permutes bravery and sincerity and love for Islamic ideology.
- Habit of research and curiosity, thinking and observation, rationalization and experiment.³⁸
- Maududi proposed practical education for students at primary level. At this level student has the ability to manage a small organization like hostel, picnic etc. Student is able to use agricultural tools and perform the work of office and house. Skills in painting should be developed in students at primary level.³⁹
- For students of elementary level subjects of basic and social sciences should be included i.e. geography, mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, astronomy, and geology. Basic knowledge of Islam including history of Islam and fundamentals of Islamic faiths that are ethics, culture and civilization should also be included.⁴⁰
- At secondary level, students should be taught two types of courses: general and special. Introduction of Arabic as well as English language should be provided so that students can pursue their research at higher level.⁴¹

information cannot attain the status of real knowledge. The doctrine of knowledge for practice should completely cohere with the Islamic ideology. Islam disapproves the acquisition of unproductive and unprofitable knowledge²⁴.

AXIOLOGICAL VIEW

Moral values that are firmly rooted have much importance in the individual and social life affairs. The great person of the world is the one who holds the great values of truth, brotherhood, love, sacrifice, fulfillment of promise and dutifulness. These are the desirable standards of humanity. Secret of human welfare is hidden in these values²⁵. In the commentary of Chapter Al-Falaq (Sura AL-Falaq) in Tamheem-ul-Quran, Maududi elucidated that the creation of creatures has been attributed to Allah and that of evil to the creatures. So the right way is that "I seek refuge from the evil of the things *Allah (swt)* has created".²⁶

Syed Maududi recognized that Islamic morality has four levels 1) Faith (*Eman*) 2) *Islam* 3) Piety (*Taqwa*) 4) Kindness (*Ihsan*). Islam uses these forces to apply its moral system in Islamic society. *Ihsan* signifies man's most profound attachment to *Allah (swt)* and His Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) and the religion. The essence of *Ihsan* is distinguished from *Taqwa*; *Taqwa*'s driving force is a fear of *Allah (swt)* while *Ihsan* is the love of *Allah (swt)* which impels man to win *Allah (swt)*'s favor.²⁷

SYED MAUDUDI'S EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS

Based on above fundamental philosophical view, Syed Maududi's convention is that education is a human endeavor guided by the fundamentals of Islam. Nucleus of Maududi's theory of education was presented in his book "*Taleemat*" that provides a brief plan for a new system of education. Syed Maududi advised some ground-breaking changes for the improvement of system of education. He urged to eliminate the difference between religious and worldly education.²⁸ Subject of Islamic study is not sufficient to fulfill the needs of Islamic education. He pursued to inculcate the Islamic outlook and tendency in the whole system of education.²⁹ The most devastating critique of the madrasa education has come from the neo-fundamentalist revivalists like Abul A'ala Maududi.³⁰ He considered the system as based on an uncritical study and memorization of antiquated texts through a perfunctory and mechanical methodology. As a result, Syed Maududi observed, the system had failed to stimulate any imaginative and creative intellectual thought among its students.³¹ Syed Maududi wrote that it was actually a remnant of the system of education of the medieval ages, of the period of Muslim rule that was geared to the training of civil servants. This is why he referred to the existing madrasa system as 'the old system of education' (qadim nizamat-e-talim), rather than as the 'system of religious education'; that is how most traditional Clerics (Ulema) describe it.³² Syed Maududi claimed that graduates of our madrasas can neither correctly represent Islam nor can they apply Islamic teachings to the problem of the modern life. He advised that students should avoid politics until they enter practical life.³³ Man has been given the leadership of the world due to knowledge. It is compulsory that man should be able to become the vice-gerent of Allah (*swt*).³⁴ Discussing the formal system of education Syed

ONTOLOGICAL VIEW

Syed Maududi discussed the four possible metaphysical doctrines related to man and universe:

- **Atheism:** This doctrine is based on pure ignorance, the universe has come into being by a mere accident and there is no wisdom, no purpose, and no object, behind its creation. It is working randomly and it will suddenly come to an end without leaving any trace behind. It has no master and if there is any, His existence does not make any difference.¹⁷
- **Polytheism:** According to this doctrine universe is neither accidental nor godless, but has many masters. This view is not supported by any scientific evidence, but simply the creation of man's own imagination.¹⁸
- **Asceticism:** This theoretical doctrine is based on austerity; this world and human body is the means of agony for man. The human body is imprisoned in this elemental cage. Though this theory is anti-social, it has influenced the social life in different ways. It has produced the system of philosophy of its own which is represented in different forms by Vedanta's, Mani-ism, Neo-Platonism, Yoga, Mysticism, Christian monasticism, Buddhism.¹⁹
- **Islam:** This doctrine is presented by Prophet of God Muhammad (SAW). This Universe is kingdom of Heavenly Being. Man in this realm is by birth subject. Man is not self-governed in this universe. He has to follow the instructions of UltimateRuler.²⁰

The key ideas that manifest themselves in his commentary "Towards Understanding of Quran" (Tafhim-ul-Quran) includes the notion that God alone is sovereign and that mankind has gone afield because it has lost his vision.²¹ Maududi emphasized the concept of reality perhaps more than others but he claims no credit for his originality. In fact he considered it to be factual and original concept of Allah (*swt*), as it was explicated by all the prophets and messengers. The first part of the basic Islamic revelation of faith, "There is no God but Allah", in Maududi's view, has implications far beyond what the words of the statement suggest at first sight. The statement not merely proclaims the unity of Allah (*swt*) as the "Creator" or even as the sole object of worship. It also proclaims the uniqueness of Allah (*swt*) as the Master, Supreme and Lord.²²

EPISTEMOLOGICAL VIEWS

Syed Maududi devoted considerable time and talent to the problem of education. The absolute source of knowledge is the Divine Revelation (*wahi*) that is the *Quran* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Seeing, listening, and thinking are fundamental faculties to gain knowledge. Knowledge is the first stair of training. The person who is not fully equipped with knowledge cannot be the good trainer and reformer. The person who wants to develop natural abilities of fellow individuals should give accurate knowledge to the 'mand, in the light of that knowledge, should develop a training system that can mold their character in a better shape.²³ Maududi reflects that the real knowledge is always practical and beneficial and leads to human redemption. The conceptual or theoretical

breadth of vision, dedication to cause, detachment and selflessness, unbounded courage, unwavering faith, unprecedented patience, uncommon wisdom, and steel-like determination, he was an ideal specimen of what a man in general and a Muslim in particular should be. He was an embodiment of Islamic virtues. He lived and died for Islam. His place is among the great Muslims of all times.⁵

Muslims remember him with great respect. His books have been widely translated all over the world.⁶With this background, an introduction of his intellectual contributions, and analysis of his philosophical and educational thoughts is being presented in an outline form below:

SYED MAUDUDI'S INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Syed Maududi was a prolific writer, and is credited with literally hundreds of works on a diverse range of issues.⁷He was one of those persons who are born with a pen in their hands. He emerged as an author at the age of thirteen. The most important book produced by Maududi during the period of 1916-28 was his classical book "Al-Jihad fil Islam". Syed Maududi wrote many articles i.e. 'The meaning of friendship in the vocabulary of the Imperialist', 'The Spanish armada', 'Tables reversed', 'The fate of Turkey'; these articles were published in different newspapers of that time.⁸He wrote a comprehensive and precise book of "Deniat" in 1937. This has been declared as a standard book of syllabus in many educational institutions of many countries around the globe and has been translated into many languages of the world.⁹Topic and presentation both are essential in Syed Maududi's views. The range of topics covered by Syed Maududi in his writings is wide, he has written on history, politics, religion and education, Quran and Tafseer-e-Quran, Hadith, civilization, society, economics and culture.¹⁰

His magnum opus is his monumental work Tafhim-ul-Quran. It is a translation of the Holy Quran in Urdu along with a detailed commentary. The work took him thirty years to complete from 1942-72.¹¹SyedMaududi in his books "Fundamentals of Islam" and "Towards understanding of Islam" has discussed various aspects of Islam in a scientific way.¹²SyedMaududihas built a strong case for the segregation of the sexes in his manuscript "Purdah" .¹³ His book "Economic System of Islam" brings a clear and detailed concept of Islamic economics.¹⁴His reformist educational views are summed up in the book "Talimat".¹⁵SyedMaududihas laid down that literature (*Adab*) should have two qualities; it should be marked by beauty of language and should have an appeal and be inspiring. Judged by these standards Syed Maududi's writings constitute Adab of the first order. They are conspicuous for the beauty of their language, have an appeal and are very impressive.¹⁶

SYEDMAUDUDI'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

The quest for the ultimate reality, search for the meaning and purpose of life, and the study of human existence has always been the most important topics of educational philosophy. Syed Maududi's philosophy of education is derived from the rudimentary thoughts of Islam.